



The Florida Senate

Local Funding Initiative Request

Fiscal Year 2026-2027

LFIR # 1357

1. Project Title Frost Planetarium Technology Upgrade for STEM Education and Workforce Development

2. Senate Sponsor Ana Maria Rodriguez

3. Date of Request 11/20/2025

4. Project/Program Description

The state's one-time investment will ensure the Frost Planetarium at the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science (Frost Science) remains a world-class resource for immersive science communication, STEM education, and community engagement across Florida. The current 8K dome projection system, in operation since the museum's opening in 2017, is nearing the end of its useful life and must be replaced with a new laser projection system to prevent significant operational disruptions and rising maintenance costs. This initiative will safeguard an essential piece of Florida's scientific, educational, and cultural infrastructure; support workforce development in technology and innovation; and ensure cultural assets continue to serve as engines of economic growth. With over \$103 million in annual economic impact statewide, Frost Science continues to boost tourism and enhance quality of life while fostering civic pride ahead of America250 celebration.

5. State Agency to receive requested funds Department of Education

State Agency contacted? No

6. Amount of the Nonrecurring Request for Fiscal Year 2026-2027

Type of Funding	Amount
Operating	0
Fixed Capital Outlay	600,000
Total State Funds Requested	600,000

7. Total Project Cost for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 (including matching funds available for this project)

Type of Funding	Amount	Percentage
Total State Funds Requested (from question #6)	600,000	50%
Matching Funds		
Federal	0	0%
State (excluding the amount of this request)	0	0%
Local	0	0%
Other	600,000	50%
Total Project Costs for Fiscal Year 2026-2027	1,200,000	100%

8. Has this project previously received state funding? No

If yes, provide the most recent instance:

Fiscal Year (yyyy-yy)	Amount		Specific Appropriation #	Vetoed
	Recurring	Nonrecurring		

9. Is future-year funding likely to be requested? No

a. If yes, indicate nonrecurring amount per year.

b. Describe the source of funding that can be used in lieu of state funding.



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Complete questions 10 and 11 for Fixed Capital Outlay Projects

10. Status of Construction

a. What is the current phase of the project?

☐ Planning ☒ Design ☐ Construction ☐ N/A

b. Is the project "shovel ready" (i.e permitted)?

Yes

c. What is the estimated start date of construction?

September 1, 2026

d. What is the estimated completion date of construction?

9/22/2026

e. What funding stream will be used for ongoing operations and maintenance of the project?

This new system will require significantly less annual operational costs, due to the fact the new projectors do not have replaceable lamps. The power and staffing required for operations and service contracts for maintenance will come from the museum's annual operating budget, including gate revenue and support through private, corporate, and foundation grants.

11. List the owners of the facility to receive, directly or indirectly, any fixed capital outlay funding. Include the relationship between the owners of the facility and the entity.

The Frost Planetarium is a facility of the Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, a 501(c)(3) private non-profit, which will use the state funds to purchase the projection system from SSIA, the vendor who installed the original system in the Frost Planetarium nine years ago.

12. Details on how the requested state funds will be expended

Spending Category	Description	Amount
Administrative Costs:		
Executive Director/Project Head Salary and Benefits		0
Other Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Operational Costs		
Salary and Benefits		0
Expense/Equipment/Travel/Supplies/Other		0
Consultants/Contracted Services/Study		0
Fixed Capital Construction/Major Renovation:		
Construction/Renovation/Land/Planning Engineering	Purchase and installation of a high-fidelity laser projection system; integration with existing theater infrastructure, including sound and control systems; and necessary upgrades to dome housing, power, and environmental systems to support the new technology.	600,000
Total State Funds Requested (must equal total from question #6)		600,000



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13. Program Performance

a. What specific purpose or goal will be achieved by the funds requested?

The requested funds will address the urgent and unavoidable need to replace the Frost Planetarium's current projection system, which is nearing the end of its operational life and must be replaced to avoid significant disruptions to programming. The aging, bulb-based technology is at the end of its life, and there is no annual service available to maintain it, making continued operation unsustainable. This funding will ensure the planetarium remains operational while enabling the broader modernization of the theater, including the installation of a state-of-the-art laser projection system. These upgrades will preserve the Frost Planetarium's status as a world-class venue for immersive science education, workforce training, and tourism engagement across Florida. The new equipment will support educational partnerships with Miami Dade College, local K-12 schools, early education programming for ages 3-5, and special programming for our neurodivergent community and senior citizens.

b. What activities and services will be provided to meet the intended purpose of these funds?

To fulfill the goals of this project, Frost Science will install a new state-of-the-art laser projection system in the Frost Planetarium. These enhancements will expand the museum's ability to deliver dynamic educational programming that aligns with school curricula, while also offering immersive learning experiences for visitors of all ages, from early childhood to senior citizens. The new infrastructure will support advanced visual storytelling and enable collaborations with academic and nonprofit partners such as Miami Dade College's MAGIC program, University of Miami, Florida International University, and the University of Florida.

c. What direct services will be provided to citizens by the appropriation project?

This appropriation will directly benefit Florida citizens through enhanced access to educational programming in the upgraded Frost Planetarium. The immersive experience will include live science shows, astronomy demonstrations, and educational content aligned with Florida education standards. Students and educators will benefit from hands-on training opportunities, and academic partners will have access to support student workforce development and professional development. The upgraded planetarium will also improve cultural offerings to general visitors, reinforcing Florida's role as a destination for science, innovation, and cultural tourism. The goal of this upgrade is to move from the 460,000 people served annually to over 500,000 per year with the enhanced capacity of the new technology.

d. Who is the target population served by this project? How many individuals are expected to be served?

The target population includes K-12 students, teachers, college students, senior citizens, and general museum visitors. Approximately 58,600 students visit the museum annually on field trips and will benefit from free Frost Planetarium shows. Over 1,700 students from 37 schools participate in the museum's STEM Designation program, and more than 200 educators engage in professional development annually. In total, the Frost Planetarium currently draws over 460,000 guests each year, making this project a high-impact investment in education, community engagement, and workforce development. The aspiration of this technology upgrade is to expand the reach of the planetarium to even more Floridians and visitors.

e. What is the expected benefit or outcome of this project? What is the methodology by which this outcome will be measured?

This project is expected to improve educational access, enhance guest satisfaction, lower operational costs, and expand career-building opportunities in key STEM and creative technology fields. Outcomes will be measured through several methods: annual attendance data, satisfaction and feedback surveys, program participation tracking, and reporting from academic and nonprofit partners. We will also track reductions in maintenance costs, particularly related to the replacement of projection bulbs, which currently exceed \$100,000 annually. Together, these metrics will provide a clear picture of the project's return on investment for the State of Florida.

f. What are the suggested penalties that the contracting agency may consider in addition to its standard penalties for failing to meet deliverables or performance measures provided for in the contract?

If the new equipment is not purchased and installed in FY 26-27, Frost Science will return the funds to the State.

14. Is this project related to mitigation, response, or recovery from a natural disaster?

a. If Yes, what phase best describes the project?



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- ☐ Mitigation (reducing or eliminating potential loss of life or property)
- ☐ Response (addressing the immediate and short-term effects of a natural disaster)
- ☐ Recovery (assisting communities return to normal operations, including rebuilding damaged infrastructure)

b. Name of the natural disaster (or Executive Order # for events not under a federal declaration):

15. Has the entity applied for or received federal assistance for this project?

- ☐ Yes, Applied
- ☐ Yes, Received
- ☐ No
- ☐ No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, provide the FEMA project worksheet ID#:

b. Provide the total project cost listed on the FEMA project worksheet:

16. Has the entity applied for or received state assistance for this project (other than this request)?

- ☐ Yes, Applied
- ☐ Yes, Received
- ☐ No
- ☐ No, but intends to apply

a. If yes, specify the program and state agency (ex. Local Government Emergency Bridge Loan, Department of Commerce):

17. Requester Contact Information

- a. First Name** **Last Name**
- b. Organization**
- c. E-mail Address**
- d. Phone Number** **Ext.**

18. Recipient Contact Information

- a. Organization**
- b. Municipality and County**



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c. Organization Type

- ☐ For Profit Entity
- ☒ Non Profit 501(c)(3)
- ☐ Non Profit 501(c)(4)
- ☐ Local Entity
- ☐ University or College
- ☐ Other (please specify)

d. First Name Last Name

e. E-mail Address

f. Phone Number Ext.

19. Lobbyist Contact Information

a. Name

b. Firm Name

c. E-mail Address

d. Phone Number

The information provided will be posted to the Florida Senate website for public viewing if sponsored by a Senator.